Ready to Type

The Bricks

Fred Brick is one of the oldest living Peace River pioneers. He is also a son of the famous John Gough Brick who set out maple trees at Dunvegan, raised championship wheat, and preached mighty sermons.

Fred has retired, now, to his Edmonton home, and when I went to see him an event occurred which shows that the spirit of ~~xxxxxx~~thoughtfulness so deeply implanted in the pioneers, is still remembered in the Brick household.

Fred has a little black cocker spaniel. I was flattered by the dog's attentions, and when I left, he followed me out to the street. Somehow my wallet slipped out of my pocket and fell on the sidewalk. When I had gone, the dog carefully picked ~~it~~ up the wallet and carried it to ~~Mr. Brick~~ his master who made a trip clear across Edmonton to return the wallet to me.

While I was visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Brick, I asked Fred what ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ experience in the Peace River Country he especially remembered. Without hesitation he said he remembered a particular trip he made up the Peace ~~River~~ xx from Vermillion with an Indian named Boucher.

" I was a trader in the North, " said Mr. Brick, " in partnership with my brother, Ally. (Ally was later a member of the Alberta Legislative Assembly, and drove a team of Moose to the meeting in Edmonton) Along about the middle of April, 1894, this Cree Indian, Boucher, and I loaded a raft with goods at Peace River and floated down to Vermillion, three hundred miles. We then loaded the goods onto pack horses, went one hundred miles west to Hay River, traded for furs, returned to Vermillion, packed up the furs, put them into a large canoe and ~~with this Cree Indian~~

~~named Boucher for companion,~~ started the long, hard journey up-river to Peace River Crossing. Itwas no easy trick poling a heavy canoe up the swift Peace, but Bocher was a wonderful canoeman. He could handle with the greatest ease, the twenty-five foot birch pole used to move the canoe, and he had a technique few men could duplicate. He would stand in the canoe and holding the pole at the center, would"roll"it over and over, shooting the canoe ahead so fast the bow would sometimes stand clear out of the water.

" It was then the twentieth of June. Nobody had come down river that season except myself. At that time there was no mail coming into the country. It was a land of utter loneliness, and rarely heard the sound of a human voice.

" One June twentieth, about three in the afternoon, Boucher suddenly stopped poling. He said to me,
"Boss, I've got to go ashore. "
"It's not time to eat. Let's travel!"
But Boucher replied, " No, I've got to go ashore."

" So we turned the canoe into the bank. Without saying another word, Boucher climbed the bank, made himself a smudge fire to keep off the mosquitos, and sat down with his back against a spruce tree.

"I didn't know what to think. Boucher had been a wonderful worker...a good companion. He was also rather remarkable in that he could speak in Cree, Chipawayan, Beaver, English and french. I would have trusted him with anything, but I could think of no reason for his strange behavior.

" However, I went about the task of building a campfire, voiling water for tea, and fried up a bunch of eggs. ...may sound strange to you that we had eggs. Well, they were given to

me by Mr. Lawrence, of Vermillion, the earliest settler there. You can bet I packed 'em carefully. Eggs were a real luxury.

" When I had dinner ready I called to Boucher to come and eat."

4 " I will not eat," said Boucher.

" Are you sick, Boucher?"

" No."

" Than what's the matter?"

" You wouldn't understand."

" And Boucher just stared into his fire. I couldn't get another word out of him. I saw the Indian wouldn't move any farther that night, and I knew we must camp. I went to the canoe, brought the bed rolls, and ~~xxx~~ sticks for the mosquito bar. I fixed my own bed, and had begun to fix Boucher's bed, when he said, "I will not sleep tonight."

" Well, you can bet I was becoming more and more puzzled. Never before had Boucher behaved like that. However, I cooked supper, prepared my blankets and went to sleep. I didn't sleep well, since I was worried about ~~xx~~ Boucher, and I kept waking up. Whenever I awoke I saw Boucher in the same position..... just squatting beside his fire.

" I got out of bed at four o'clock, built a fire, cooked breakfast and called to Boucher to come and eat."

" I will not eat," said Boucher.

" By this time you can bet I was mighty worried. I went over to Boucher and said,

" Boucher, what's the matter?"

" You wouldn't understand."

"I couldn't get another word out of him. I took the situation as philosophically as I could, completed my breakfast, and, since I was very tired, went back to bed. I slept until late in the

forenoon..

" At noon I fixed grup and called Boucher again, but the Indian only shook his head..

" Well, I was beginning to think we were marooned on the banks of the Peace for good, but about two aclock that afternoon, Boucher got up. Without saying a word to me he fixed himself something to eat when he had finished he grunted, " Let's travel."

" While we were packing up I asked, " Boucher, what was the reason for this delay?"

" You wouldn't understand, " said Boucher, but he got a good look at my face and pretty soon he continued, "I was getting a message, Boss.. Last night a baby girl was born to my wife, and the child lived two hours.. "

" Well, can you wonder that I thought Boucher had gone crazy? There we were, about half-way between Vermillion and Peace River Crossing.. Not a soul had passed that way but ourselves all season.. There was no mail...no telegraph. Yet here was this Indian claiming to have had a message from God knows where, that he was the father of a baby girl that had lived two hours."

"Boucher, have you gone bats?"

" We will travel, " replied Boucher..

"Well, sir, we did travel that afternoon.. Boucher worked like a madman! At times he poled so hard and so fast that I feared the canoe might bust apart.. He refused to stop for supper, and poled until ten o'clock that night.. At ten o'clock we went ashore and made camp. But Boucher hardly slept and was eager to start at three the next morning.. Boucher worked like a fiend! That day we made a day and a half of ordinary up-river travel.....about thirty-five miles.. If you think that's not

good travelling, try poling a heavy canoe up the Peace sometime. The next day we made the same distance. In the afternoon, the following day, we passed a place where an old half-breed named Pat Wesley lived. Wesley came out of his shack as we went past, and I called to him, " Hey, Wesley!" The old fellow came down to the shore and we turned in. "

" Wesley," I asked, " what's the news?"

" No news, " said Wesley. " Nothin's happened."

" Have there been any births, deaths or marriages, " I asked, looking at Boucher.

" No, " replied Wesley. " Nothin' new. "

" Boucher, " I said, " that was a dream you had. You see, nothing's happened."

" Boss," replied the Indian, " you don't know what you're talking about. That message came to me, and it must be true."

" Well, about five miles above the Wesley place we met some men taking out logs. I called to them.

" Anybody been born, died or married?"

" Haven't heard of anybody."

" This time I just looked at Boucher and didn't make any remarks. We got to within seven miles of Peace River and were poling the canoe under a cut bank when we heard somebody call out to us from the bank above. I looked up and saw my brother. He was holding the reins of a saddle horse in his hand.

" Boucher ran the canoe ashore, and Ally came down the bank. Boucher and I got out of the canoe, built a fire and put the kettle on. After awhile Ally said:

" Boucher, I have bad news for you."

" I know, " replied Boucher.

"You know," asked Ally, " that three nights ago a baby girl was

born to your wife, and that the child lived only a few hours?"

" I knew when it happened, " replied Boucher. " I told the Boss, but he laughed at me. If you don't mind, I'll take your horse and go on home."

" Well, Boucher took the horse and rode away. Ally and I poled the canoe on home. But I've wondered ever since about that message Boucher got in the night. There are strange things in the North. Stranger things than anybody knows about...". ŻwŻxz sxyxzxzxz"

Jervis Poce

" I'm especially interested in the women who pioneered in the Peace River Country, " I said. " What about the women? "

" Well, " replied Fred, " you ought to ask Mother about that."

" Oh, I don't really think I.....", began Mrs. Brick.

" Yes you do, Mother. Tell him about yourself. The ladies are too modest," Fred said to me, "You'll hear many a yarn about the men, but when the women begin to talk, you hexrxżxżnzxz get the complete picture."

" Well, " said Mrs. Brick, "if you really want to hear my side of it...."

" I do, " I said, and here is Mrs. Brick's story, just as she xtold it.

(Jervis Poce before beginning Mrs. B's Story)